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Cranston Students Prepare for Careers in Defense

Maritime Pipefitting Program Aligned to Needs of Submarine Shipbuilding

CRANSTON, RI – SENEDIA—The Alliance for Defense Tech, Talent, and Innovation—joined Cranston Public Schools today for a ribbon cutting and student demonstration at the new Maritime Pipefitting Program at Cranston High School East. They were joined at the event by Cranston Mayor Ken Hopkins and officials from General Dynamics Electric Boat and the Rhode Island Department of Education.

“When educators, industry, and government collaborate in the best interest of students, great things can happen,” said **U.S. Senator Jack Reed** (RI), Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee. “This initiative illustrates the power of that collaboration and reinforces why workforce development is a key lever to accelerate progress, innovation, and growth of our national defense. The students participating in this program today and in the future are on the right path to a career that provides stability, prosperity, and purpose.”

“The new pipefitting lab at Cranston High School East will help ensure the Ocean State has the talent it needs to help meet growing national security demands,” said **Senator Sheldon Whitehouse** (RI). “I applaud Cranston schools, SENEDIA, and Electric Boat for working together to connect students with well-paying careers and prepare the next generation of our defense manufacturing workforce.”

“This is a great program. Students leave with the skills they need to be successful, which is why 16 members of the Class of 2024 at Cranston East alone have already been offered jobs at General Dynamics Electric Boat,” said **Cranston Mayor Ken Hopkins**, a former East educator. “I firmly believe this is the direction education should be going in the future.”

“The students here gain hands-on, real-world experience. They’re not only preparing for their futures but they’re also giving back to this school and to this community,” said **Deputy Commissioner of Education Lisa Odom-Villella**. “This is what brings kids to school and keeps them engaged. It’s an amazing opportunity.”

The Maritime Pipefitting Program is an official General Dynamics Electric Boat partner program, providing students with training and exposure to pipefitting careers in submarine shipbuilding.

“The submarines currently under contract will require a workforce that, today, is still in elementary school,” said **Jess Key**, manager of Workforce Development & Supply Chain at Electric Boat. “EB and our partners—in industry, in K-12, and in postsecondary education—are committed to engaging more young people and empowering them to learn, explore, and hopefully pursue a future in defense. This Cranston lab is one of an increasing number of statewide programs that exposes students to the challenges and rewards of working in this industry, and we’re excited to see what the students coming through the program will achieve.”

The ribbon cutting took place just one day after National Submarine Day, an annual remembrance of the U.S. Navy’s first modern submarine, the *USS Holland*. In honor of the holiday, SENEDIA announced they have facilitated the training of over 5,000 people across the region through their New England Submarine Shipbuilding Partnership.

“Defense is a \$119 billion industry in New England, supporting more than 34,000 jobs in Rhode Island alone. These are hands-on, rewarding, and good-paying careers,” said **Tim Fox**, director of operations at SENEDIA. “We’re proud to work with K-12 partners like Cranston Public Schools to expose students to these opportunities early on and put them on a path to meaningful employment with rigorous training, skills building, and professional networking before they even earn their high school diploma.”

Building on the existing Plumbing Technology program at Cranston High School East, enhanced lab space—made possible through Department of Defense funding from SENEDIA—will expand program offerings to train students for careers in submarine shipbuilding. The existing lab focused on residential and commercial plumbing.

“The demand for career education and applied learning continues to grow and Cranston is meeting that demand with rigorous learning opportunities that have direct applications in the workforce,” said **Assistant Superintendent Norma Cole**, who welcomed guests to the event and introduced the students participating in a demonstration of the maritime pipefitting equipment. “We are proud to offer a diverse set of experiences for our students that allow them to explore careers, develop essential skills, build their professional networks, and consider exciting pathways for their futures.”

To learn more about SENEDIA and its workforce development programming, visit www.SENEDIA.org.

SENEDIA, the alliance for defense tech, talent, and innovation, is a catalyst for thought leadership, technical innovation, and workforce development. SENEDIA connects, convenes, and

partners across the industry to support talent, innovation, and growth. For more information on SENEDIA, please visit www.SENEDIA.org.